



South East Norfolk Elementary Accommodation Review Committee

Tuesday, March 22, 2016 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Lynndale Heights Public School

Meeting Notes

1. Welcome and Introduction

W. Baker, Facilitator of the Committee, welcomed Committee members and those present in the audience to the first meeting of the South East Norfolk Elementary Accommodation Review Committee.

In Attendance:

Committee Members

W. Baker (Facilitator) – Superintendent of Education, **Rita Collver** – Trustee, **John Harris** – Trustee, **Krista Kitchen** – Parent Representative, Elgin Avenue Public School, **Melissa Mummery** – Parent Representative, Lakewood Elementary, Lakewood Elementary, **Jessica Smith** – Parent Representative, Lynndale Heights Public School, **Tara Beerepoot** – Parent Representative, Walsh Public School, **Christine Oliveira** – Parent Representative, West Lynn Public School.

Resource Staff

Brenda Blancher - Director of Education, **Samantha Nicholson** – Principal, Elgin Avenue Public School, **Lori Rodgers** – Principal, Lakewood Elementary, **William Valoppi** – Principal, Lynndale Heights Public School, **Dirk Matthys** – Principal, Walsh Public School, **Dianne Lefler** – Principal, West Lynn Public School, **Jamie Gunn** – Superintendent of Business, **Michelle Le Dressay** – Planning Officer, **Shawn McKillop** – Manager of Communications and Community Relations, and **Wendy Slaven** – Recording Secretary.

Other Grand Erie Trustees in Attendance

David Dean, Karen Sandy, Brian Doyle, Carol Ann Sloat

2. Review of the Accommodation Process

Director of Education, Brenda Blancher, reviewed Policy FT5 Pupil Accommodation Reviews Information presented will be posted on the Grand Erie website at www.granderie.ca Questions regarding the process may be submitted by email to info@granderie.ca

3. Background Information and School Information Profiles

Jamie Gunn presented slides of the data, posted at www.granderie.ca

4. Questions from the Community

(C – Comment, Q – Question, R – Response)

Q Why have we not yet applied for funding for renovations/replacement for Elgin? What happens if they say no?

R This information has been sent to the Ministry of Education, but they won't approve until the ARC process is done. There will be another opportunity to apply for funding in the fall, and the process may be done at that time.

The following statement was read by West Lynn Parent Representative, C. Oliveira:

Transportation concerns seem to be the most numerous. Busing students from the large central hub of Simcoe, to the smaller town of Port Dover, 11 km away, will have a major impact on our students and families. Our younger kindergarten children have a hard enough time with the current short bus rides. A school day is a very long and exhausting day for the smallest of our students, and come home time they are tired, hungry, and moody, to say the least. Many of our older students grade 6 – 8 have after school jobs: newspaper routes, baby sitting, or small part time store jobs, which they require to help their families supply extra-curricular and social activities, as well as saving for post-secondary education. Sending our students out of town will mean that many of our children will not be able to maintain these jobs due to the increase in transportation time, and they will not benefit from the financial, educational, social and personal skills that having employment, and participating in extra-curricular activities offer.

Before and After school programs are offered in many of our schools. If we are transporting students from Simcoe to Port Dover, will parents be able to afford the extra cost to drive to and from Port Dover twice a day. And understanding that these changes are being proposed to bring more funding into our schools, will parents and students be interested in participating in the after school activities.

Studies have proven that children that walk to school daily perform better in the class room. This is caused by the increased brain activity from the increased physical activity. Sending children on long bus rides does not promote higher test scores.

Of course, as parents, our number one concern is our children's safety. I am personally aware of how poor the road conditions are between Simcoe and Port Dover in the winter months. There have been many mornings this past winter where my regular morning drive to Port Dover was treacherous to say the least. If Grand Erie continues not cancelling schools or buses in poor weather, our children are in great danger.

With the proposed boundary change, many parents have considered transferring their students to the Catholic Board. Which would decrease our school populations and decrease our funding.

Currently, the traffic congestion at Elgin during the morning and afternoon is spilling over to the Norfolk General Hospital causing confusion and delays for all. And the lack of parking is also a major concern. Many staff and visitors are required to park on the road a decent walk from the school. Adding bus traffic and increasing student capacity to Elgin will only increase the current traffic situation, and cause more delays and frustration. However, with ample on-road parking and the White Horse Plazas rear parking area, West Lynn's current pick-up and drop-off allows for free flowing traffic with regards to our children's safety.

In concern to the proposed boundary changes, the new subdivision currently being developed on Decou is advertising the proximity to West Lynn. This could be very misleading to new families entering Simcoe that their children will be bused to Port Dover.

Many young families have made huge financial decisions while purchasing their homes on the basis that they would like for their children to attend West Lynn within the next few years. Our school has been sought out by not only new families wishing their children to have the small school experience, but also

by families from other Simcoe schools. West Lynn is very well liked in our community for the outstanding behavioural and academic achievements of our students, and the amazing faculty and staff that we have. Our up and coming parents are concerned about their children completing their junior kindergarten year at West Lynn, and being moved to a new school in the 2018/19 school year. Seeing that we will have to displace Elgin students for a period of time prior to the merger of schools, there would appear not to be any room for these new kindergartens to start their school career at Elgin to help them better adapt to school life.

Financially, our concerns relate to the board's desire to fund a very expensive renovation and expansion to a very old and dilapidated school. A very irresponsible financial decision. Elgin is currently the oldest school in Simcoe, and requires an excessive amount of work to meet accessibility, health and safety, and capacity standards. While Lynndale is a new school, West Lynn, however is still in very good repair. Being a single floor structure we are already accessible, the only health and safety concern currently is the tree roots clogging the sewer lines, which is a common issue, and a relatively easy and inexpensive fix, which will have to be taken care of prior to the proposed closure anyway. Our parking issues are only intensified by improper parking practices, and parents ignoring the posted drop-off and pick-up regulations for our school. With ample parking on Charlton Crescent, and our wonderful crossing guards, there is no reason for parents to be using the parking lot for drop-offs. Although, with this being said, Parents Council have already begun discussions of financially assisting in the paving of the parking lot and school yard as our School Improvement Project. Besides the sewer line and parking lot our school needs to repaint the gym ceiling.

As for property size, yes Elgin does have the most property, and would be the easiest to expand on. With a rearrangement of play equipment, there would also be enough room to add four classrooms to Lynndale. There is a sizeable unused parcel of land behind West Lynn, which if we could acquire, we could also expand four more classrooms, and possibly an actual kitchen to facilitate our snack and breakfast programs, and our annual turkey dinner.

If Elgin were to close, there is a fair amount of land to offer to the community. And with its proximity to Norfolk General Hospital, the land maybe an attractive investment to the hospital, to expand their facility, offering a variety of health care and more jobs in Norfolk County. Or, possibly Elgin's land would better suit the proposed building of a university in Simcoe, that would also bring more jobs and people to our community. Both of these options would allow for extra revenue for the Board to use towards the expansions and repairs to West Lynn and Lynndale, or possibly introduce high quality equipment or programs to all of our schools.

A major concern to parents also extends to the overcrowding of our schools. It has been made very apparent over the years, that overcrowding classrooms to get more funding, does not promote a healthy learning environment. As it stands currently, our schools offer smaller class sizes which allows teachers the ability to work one-on-one with their students. This has proven extremely effective at West Lynn, as we have currently overtaken Norfolk County media with our recent achievements the past few years. For three years West Lynn has won "Read Your Way to the Fair" due to our wonderful Mrs. Pond offering a personal touch to each of our students and providing a very well stocked and diverse library. We placed well during the Music Festival, with our choirs and Bell choir. And we dominated the Public Speaking Competition just the other week, which is just to name a few of our recent accomplishments. Our parents

have to come to expect a superior West Lynn Standard of Education, which far exceeds the board's standards. Our children are excelling with these unique standards, and we fear that with West Lynn on the chopping block our standards will suffer also.

We may be small, but we are mighty WEST LYNN Warriors!!!

Action Items:

- Provide draft transportation model, staff parking and bus drop off information
- Land title search for vacant parcel of land behind West Lynn

Q What happens to the property when a school is closed?

R If determined the property is surplus to needs, the process requires it be offered to preferred agencies, government agencies, other school boards. After 90 days, if no interest to purchase has been expressed, application can be made to the Ministry to sell privately. Proceeds go into Capital Funds to use for future capital expenditures.

Q Explain decision making around catchment areas that are within town of Simcoe to go to Dover. For the small number of families involved, can't they be accommodated in Simcoe, where they presently participate in after-school sports activities?

R With 504 extra spaces spread among schools in Simcoe, we need to congregate those spaces – if it's decided to close one school, and that school happens to be West Lynn, families could apply for Out of Attendance Area status at a school within Simcoe. Additionally, the option of accommodating this group of families within the Simcoe catchment area could be presented to Trustees for consideration.

Q Could you accommodate the required number of students at West Lynn with the purchase of surrounding available property?

R This will have to be evaluated.

Q Should recommendation stand, there is concern that cultural, social life is in town, but bussed to another town for school. Is there flexibility in the boundary line?

R There is a Board Policy for accommodating out of area requests for students.

Q A lot live in the county, why don't you leave it the way it is?

R The funding model was different in the past. Ministry of Education gave School Boards money for small schools, additional funding needed was requested from local government. There was a change in funding in the early 90's. Presently, Boards are funded on a per-pupil basis. If there are 500 excess pupil spaces, we are in fact funding the equivalent to one empty school.

Q Why this process now?

R It is called right-sizing.

Q Elgin was too far gone two years ago, but you will put money into it now?

R There were serious concerns expressed in the past, but a more recent building inspection showed the core of building to be in better shape than was thought.

-
- Q Why can't French Immersion program be moved to a bigger facility that would accommodate them? Huge social impact in moving local children – French Immersion students are already coming from further away.
- R Currently 2 KP, Gr. 3, 4, 5 French Immersion equals 38%, but when fully implemented would be more than 50%. Regular 272, French Immersion 168, by the time it is fully rolled out in 2019, French Immersion will be larger than English. This suggestion will be presented as an option for consideration by the Trustees.
- Q Could we see one bar for French and one bar for English on the graph?
- R The enrolment information is posted on the website, combined and separately for regular and French Immersion program.
- Q Concern that projection is higher for French Immersion – in 4 years when my child in Gr. 7 are you going to send my children to another school?
- R We hope to have a solution within 4 years. We don't want to hamper a successful program, but don't want to give impression that one program takes preference over another.
- Q Read in September that French Immersion will be cancelled – now it has taken over.
- R There has been discussion in other Boards as how to accommodate French Immersion students – this is a province-wide challenge. French Immersion does not have access points all the way through. JK - Gr. 4. Sometimes child moves into area – wouldn't allow a Gr. 7 to enrol.
- Q Which census is the data from?
- R 2011.
- Q What is board's policy on portables, Walsh has three? Are boundaries changing to reduce percentage of kids, where do we stop, does it become French Immersion that gets pushed out?
- R Try not give impression that one program is pitted against another – best overall service to student population is the goal.
- C I have kids in French Immersion that are on bus for over 1 hour – it is doable.
- Q Will you consider in the process that increasing Elgin would impact negatively on Norfolk General Hospital? There would be more congestion, couldn't get down the street.
- R We will answer next week.
- Q Is there a cap how long students can be on bus?
- R Students ride the bus longer for specialized programs (i.e. Special Education). Given the small percentage of schools that offer French Immersion, it is a trade-off parents have to make, personal choice.
- Q If French Immersion was not in Walsh, would Walsh be on chopping block?
- R Hypothetical question – no answer.
- Q Walsh has a projection of 97.9% capacity – doesn't leave a lot of room for anything else, is there not a way to look at the number? Still requires portables, concern there will be more.
- R Some things can be done, in the long term portables would be gone.

-
- Q What is the role of parent reps on the committee?
R They are a conduit for the school community. They can hold meetings with school communities, provide information for those who can't attend.
- Q Is the Walsh parent French Immersion or English?
R Have 2 French Immersion children. We held a meeting, but no one came.
- C Didn't have Facebook information.
R Paper documents were sent home regarding the ARC process.
- C There needs to be a better way, need an English parent rep to be more equal.
R We need to make sure communication is effective.
- Q If Walsh stays with small percentage of English – will all grades be together in 1 class?
What would be the English language organization?
R There will not be classes with 3 grades. This is a question to bring back.
- Q If Elgin is rebuilt would it not make sense to have dual track French Immersion there? West Lynn capacity is no problem.
R This can be presented as an option.
- Q If there was another French Immersion school centrally, would numbers increase? Walsh is way out there, if in Port Dover, what would the numbers would be like?
R There is no data of inquiries made about French Immersion.
- Director's Comment: French Immersion is an English Language Program – an Immersion Program, not a French Language Program. Growing at Walsh, Burford, but don't get a lot of new students. Grand Erie parents decide which program for their child – it will not reduce excess student spaces.
- C Closing the school sounds like a last resort option. Money is always issue, but very important for everyone to consider the effect on students and parents. Expanding Elgin sounds like most efficient financially, but won't be most beneficial to parents, and social implications for children.
R Submit to info@granderie.ca
- C Look at the geographical area for the 20 students who would move from West Lynn to Lakewood. It makes more sense to attend a Simcoe school.
- Q Take into consideration what it will do to the kids, won't benefit them to stick them in classrooms, there will be anxiety Want to know about supervision when teachers are maxed out when you add 100 other students.
R When we move 100 kids, teachers are moved as well – class sizes won't change. In regard to Mental Health, there will be a Transition Committee to help community. Kids are resilient, we as adults see more problems.
- Q Will you take the same teachers for Special Education children?
R Don't know that – all schools have Special Education supports – resources are based on needs and enrolment.

-
- C Mental health comes down to helping kids cope. This happens in small schools, super schools do the opposite.
- Q Does French Immersion equal greater income, success, public service jobs? Will they get jobs in Haldimand Norfolk? Gather that information and share.
- R The French Immersion concerns expressed are outside the mandate of this ARC process. Perhaps the question could be framed differently.
- C Drive my child every day with a smile on his face – it's a safe environment. You can't guarantee faith in a new environment.
- C Recommendation from community citizen to purchase the Landon property and build a new school; offer to sell Elgin Avenue to Norfolk County, and turn West Lynn into a seniors' home. (Maps detailing the properties will be posted on the website.)
- Q Have you considered a single track French Immersion program? Move 270 students from Walsh to a single track French Immersion school in Norfolk.
- R This could be presented as an option for consideration by the Trustees
5. Other Business
6. Next Meeting Date
- Tuesday, April 12, 2016, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at Lakewood Elementary will be designated as a Delegation Night - information on the process is posted on the website.

Note – following the March 22nd meeting, it was determined that, due to the large amount of requested information coming back to the April 12th meeting, the date for the Delegation Meeting be moved to later in the process.